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HOMOSEXUAL POLITICIAN NAMED AS DOUBLE AGENT

BY ANDREW WARSHAW

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

LONDON (AP) - THE JOURNALIST WHO ACCUSED THE 1974 LABOR GOVERNMENT OF COVERING UP UNRESOLVED SPY CHARGES AGAINST BRITAIN'S FORMER COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE CHIEF REPORTED TODAY THAT A PROMINENT HOMOSEXUAL LABORITE WAS A DOUBLE AGENT.

THE NEW TARGET OF CHAPMAN PINCHER, VETERAN DEFENSE CORRESPONDENT OF THE DAILY MAIL, WAS THE LATE TOM DRIBERG, AN ADMITTED HOMOSEXUAL AND ONETIME GOSSIP COLUMNIST WHO WAS CHAIRMAN OF THE LABOR PARTY IN 1957-58, A MEMBER OF ITS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE FOR 23 YEARS AND A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS FROM 1942 TO 1974.

DRIBERG, WHO DIED IN 1976 AT THE AGE OF 71, "REPORTED ON THE PERSONAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF HIS FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES IN PARLIAMENT" TO BOTH MI-5, THE BRITISH COUNTER-ESPIONAGE AGENCY, AND THE SOVIET KGB. PINCHER WROTE IN THE THIRD INSTALLMENT OF A SERIES TAKEN FROM A SERIES HE IS PUBLISHING LATER THIS WEEK.

"BOTH MI-5 AND THE KGB HAD NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE FACT THAT HE WAS WORKING FOR THE OTHER SIDE," PINCHER WROTE. "BOTH SOUGHT TO USE HIM FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES."

PINCHER SAID ALTHOUGH DRIBERG DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO STATE SECRETS, HE LOANED HIS APARTMENT TO OTHER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT INCLUDING CABINET MINISTERS "FOR THEIR SEXUAL LIAISONS" AND PASSED ON INFORMATION HE GATHERED.

MI-5 STORED THE INFORMATION "AS PART OF THEIR FILE ON MPs THEY WERE WORRIED ABOUT," WHILE THE KGB FILED IT AS POTENTIAL BLACKMAIL MATERIAL, SAID PINCHER.

DRIBERG WAS PAID FOR HIS INFORMATION, THE REPORT CONTINUED, AND HIS CONNECTION WITH MI-5 ALSO SAVED HIM REGULARLY FROM PROSECUTION ON CHARGES OF HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY BEFORE IT WAS LEGALIZED BETWEEN CONSENTING ADULTS IN 1969.

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HE WAS CHARGED WITH INDECENT ASSAULT IN 1935 - AND ACQUITTED. PINCHER THAT IN LATER YEARS HE WAS "REPEATEDLY CAUGHT EITHER PROCURING OR COMMITTING A HOMOSEXUAL ACT" BUT ESCAPED PROSECUTION BY REFERRING POLICE TO AN MI-5 TELEPHONE NUMBER. THE AGENCY THEN "PUT THE ... OF ITS PROTECTION ROUND HIM."

DAIBERG, A LEFT-WINGER, EDITED THE GOSSIP COLUMN IN THE DAILY EXPRESS UNDER THE PEN NAME ... IAN HICKEY, WROTE AT LENGTH ABOUT HIS HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITIES FROM THE AGE OF 11 ON IN AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY, "RULING PASSIONS." IT WAS PUBLISHED POSTHUMOUSLY IN 1977.

IN HIS FIRST ARTICLE MONDAY, PINCHER ALLEGED THAT THE LATE SIR ROGER HOLLIS, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF MI-5 FROM 1956 UNTIL HIS RETIREMENT IN 1965, WAS A TOP-LEVEL SOVIET AGENT. HE REPORTED THAT HOLLIS UNDERWENT A 48-HOUR INTERROGATION IN 1970 AND "NEVER CRACKED." BUT HE SAID A FORMER SECRETARY TO THE CABINET, LORD TREND, MADE ANOTHER SECRET INVESTIGATION IN 1974, A YEAR AFTER HOLLIS DIED, AND CONCLUDED HE WAS A "LIKELY SUSPECT" WHOSE ANSWERS TO HIS QUESTIONERS WERE "UNCONVINCING."

SIR HAROLD WILSON, THE LABOR PARTY ELDER STATESMAN WHO HEADED THE GOVERNMENT IN 1974, REFUSED TO MAKE ANY COMMENT ON PINCHER'S CHARGES BEFORE PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER MAKES A STATEMENT ABOUT THEM IN COMMONS THURSDAY. BUT ANOTHER MEMBER OF HIS PARTY, DENNIS CANAVAN, SAID: "THIS SEEMS LIKE YET ANOTHER COVER-UP BY THE ESTABLISHMENT."

MRS. THATCHER RETURNED TO LONDON TUESDAY NIGHT FROM A COMMON MARKET SUMMIT MEETING TO DEAL WITH THE SECOND SCANDAL IN BRITAIN'S INTELLIGENCE NETWORK TO SURFACE SINCE SHE TOOK OFFICE. LAST NOVEMBER, A BOOK BY ANOTHER JOURNALIST FORCED HER TO REVEAL THAT ANTHONY BLUNT, A FORMER MI-5 OPERATIVE AND QUEEN ELIZABETH II'S ART HISTORIAN, HAD BEEN A MEMBER OF THE SPY RING THAT INCLUDED KIM PHILBY, GUY BURGESS AND DONALD MACLEAN, ALL OF WHOM DEFECTED TO THE SOVIET UNION.

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